

SAFETY ADVISORY BULLETIN 99-02

PASSAGE PLANNING FOR THE OREGON & WASHINGTON COASTS: SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS



New Carissa photo courtesy of Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality.

Could this happen to you? A large bulk ship bound for port stranded in a winter storm, resulting in a major salvage effort. The ship released a substantial amount of fuel oil, contaminating many beaches.

The ship stranded while waiting near a harbor entrance for rough conditions to subside and the bar to re-open. When it stranded the ship turned parallel to the beach. Rough winter weather hampered salvage efforts and, aground on a sandy beach, the ship wrecked.

The coastal waters of Oregon and Washington in the U.S. Pacific Northwest often challenge vessels and crews transiting them with adverse conditions. The challenge is greatest in the winter months. Several incidents of vessels adrift and the shipwreck described above during the winter of 1998/1999 attest to the reality and seriousness of the challenge.

Storms and gales, sometimes of long duration and sometimes in rapid succession, generate high seas and impact the Oregon and Washington coasts, especially during winter months. Swells traveling from distant storms merge with local weather to create treacherous combined seas. A lee shore may be encountered. Weather conditions often deteriorate rapidly.

Vessels transiting the coastal waters of Oregon and Washington have limited choices for finding safe harbor

or anchorage. These choices may be further limited when coastal port entrances are closed due to rough bar conditions at locations such as Coos Bay, Columbia River and Grays Harbor. When conditions deteriorate, vessels may not be able to enter port due to a bar closure. Should a vessel experience a casualty, tug assistance from nearby coastal ports may be unavailable due to conditions on the bar. Brief windows of improved weather may cause waiting vessel traffic to get under way to cross the bar, potentially leading to heavier than usual vessel traffic during marginal conditions around harbor entrances.

Please Plan Carefully! Adequate attention during the planning phase of a passage can help manage the challenges. The planning phase should take particular care in establishing the intended track to allow as much sea room as possible in case of foul weather and/or shipboard propulsion/steering casualty. The Area to Be Avoided (ATBA) along the Washington coast should also be considered in the planning phase of a passage.

Planning should assist in answering questions such as:

- What local sources will provide information on potential anchorage sites, bar and weather conditions (current and forecast)?
- From where, and under what conditions, might assistance be available?
- Is there any maintenance of vital ship systems that should be accomplished prior to entering coastal waters?
- Does the vessel have adequate spares aboard to allow for repairs underway?
- Where can the vessel safely wait if rough bar conditions keep it at sea?
- Where do the pilotage grounds begin?
- If anchoring becomes necessary along the coast, what special precautions are required?
- What are the company's guidelines for the vessel being taken under tow in case of a casualty?

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

- Does the vessel have the proper equipment to allow it to be taken under tow in an emergency?
- What authorities must be notified should a casualty occur?
- What local sources are available to find information not normally found in general references or to verify critical information obtained from general references?

Masters undertaking a voyage along the Oregon and/or Washington coasts also should ensure their crews are prepared. Preparation should include the review of procedures for handling propulsion and steering casualties, emergency towing operations, and emergency anchoring operations. Tug captains

also should ensure their crew is trained in barge recovery operations.

With adequate attention to planning, the challenge of a transit of the Oregon and Washington coasts is manageable.

For more information contact Ed Wilson, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, wilson.edmund@deq.state.or.us or Mike Lynch, Washington Department of Ecology, mily461@ecy.wa.gov.

To obtain information on other available Ecology marine safety publications, mail or fax a copy of this page to our Olympia office, or call us at the number below. Please be sure your address and phone number are clearly indicated.

Check our web site at www.wa.gov/ecology/spills/spills.html.

Fax: (360) 407-7288 ♦ Phone: (360) 407-6959

☐ Check here to automatically receive copies of future Safety Advisory Bulletins.

Ecology is an equal-opportunity agency. If you have special accommodation needs, contact Mariann Cook-Andrews at (360) 407-7211 (voice) or (360) 407-6006 (TDD).



Printed on Recycled Paper

Address service requested

WASHINGTON STATE
Department of Ecology
P.O. Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600